

## Pennsylvania DEP: Lyme disease risk now present in all 67 counties

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HARRISBURG, Pa. - Pennsylvania officials are warning residents that there is now a danger of Lyme disease in every county in the Commonwealth. Department of Environmental Protection researchers said Tuesday that blacklegged deer ticks have now been observed in all 67 Pennsylvania counties, the first time that has happened.

"DEP's vector management team's confirmation of the high risk of Lyme disease in every county of the Commonwealth verifies that every Pennsylvanian, from Philadelphia to Erie, must take precautions to prevent the spread of Lyme disease," said acting DEP Secretary John Quigley.

The ticks are the primary carrier of the disease that can cause fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and joint pain. In recent years, the tick has become embedded in western Pennsylvania, although the rate of Lyme disease is lower there than in the rest of the commonwealth. Pennsylvania has reported the most cases of Lyme disease in the nation for the past five years.

"The first line of defense against Lyme disease and any other tick-borne illnesses is avoiding tick-infested areas," said acting Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine. "We know, however, that as the weather becomes nicer, many residents spend more time outdoors. We suggest that people wear protective clothing, use insect repellent (i.e. DEET), and do a full body check after spending time outdoors."

Officials said parents should check children for ticks, and showering within two hours of outdoor exposure may also help prevent transmission. "If an individual has been bitten by a tick, we recommend that they remove the tick carefully with a set of fine tipped tweezers," Levine said. "If an individual develops signs and symptoms of Lyme disease after a tick bite, we urge them to seek medical attention.

Early diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease may prevent late-stage complications."

PA Department of Health Lyme Disease Fact Sheet:

<http://files.dep.state.pa.us/Newsroom/NewsroomPortalFiles/Lyme%20Disease.pdf>